

SUBJECT: SWAT	NUMBER: 2-30.01
EFFECTIVE DATE:	REVIEW DATE:
NMMLEPSC STANDARDS: OPR.06.01, OPR.06.02, OPR.06.03, OPR.06.04, OPR.06.05	APPROVED: Sheriff

I. POLICY

The presence of a highly skilled and trained tactical unit has been shown to substantially reduce the risk of injury or death to citizens, officers and suspects. A well-managed “team” response to critical incidents usually results in their successful resolution. It is the intent of the special weapons and tactics team (SWAT) to provide a highly trained and skilled team and to support the sheriff’s department with a tactical response to critical incidents.

II. SWAT MISSION STATEMENT

It is the goal of the Valencia County Sheriff’s Department Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT) to provide the community with a well-trained tactical team to assure the community it has an option to bring critical incidents to the safest possible conclusion with the overall goal of saving lives always being in our forethought. The mission of the SWAT is to support the department and other public safety entities with a tactical response to certain critical incidents and community problems that are best solved by the application of advanced tactics and planning. The ultimate goal of this application of tactical expertise is to end these critical incidents and resolve these problems with no loss of life or injury to deputies, innocent persons or suspects.

III. DEFINITIONS

The mission of the SWAT team is to support the sheriff’s department with a tactical response to critical incidents. Critical incidents are defined as follows:

Hostage situations: The holding of any person(s) against their will by armed or potentially armed suspect.

Barricade solutions: The standoff created by an armed or potentially armed suspect in any location, whether fortified or not, who is refusing to comply with police demands for surrender.

Sniper situation: The firing upon citizens and/or police by an armed suspect.

Apprehension: The arrest or apprehension of armed or potentially armed suspect(s) where there is a likelihood of armed resistance.

Tactical tracking: the tracking of any armed or possibly armed person(s) that are actively fleeing apprehension on foot or by motorized vehicle through unimproved terrain.

Warrant service: The service of search or arrest warrants where there is a likelihood of armed or potentially armed suspects(s) and there is the potential for armed resistance.

Special assignments: Any assignment, approved by the Sheriff, Undersheriff, or team commander, based upon the level of threat or the need for a special expertise.

I. COMMAND AND CONTROL

A. The SWAT team is part-time and is available 24-hour a day on call special response unit. It falls under the command of the SWAT Commander.

1. The SWAT commander directs the:
 - a. SWAT team leader,
 - b. Crisis negotiators
 - c. Scout/observers/snipers
2. The SWAT team leader directly oversees:
 - a. SWAT team members
 - b. Tactical medics
3. Team leader provides direct supervision and operational support for tactical team members during activation.
4. When activated for operation, the SWAT team commander, or the team leader (when the commander is absent), reports directly to the incident commander, where one has been designated.
5. The SWAT commander is responsible for deployment of SWAT, all tactical decision-making, and tactical resolution of the incident.
6. The SWAT commander is subordinate to the incident commander only in terms of *when and if* the tactical option will be initiated, not *how* it will be performed. Unless the SWAT team commander relinquished his control to another person outside the SWAT team, no other person, who is not in a leadership position within the SWAT, will attempt to direct, supervise, or control any element or member of the SWAT during a tactical operation (when a SWAT ranking officer is present).
7. If no SWAT ranking officers or team leaders are present, team members fall under the supervision of the on-scene ranking officer. If and when a SWAT ranking officer or team leader arrives, he shall assume tactical command of the incident. The other ranking deputy(s) present may then concentrate on other responsibilities i.e. logistic support, communications, and overall incident command.

8. SWAT members become subordinate to the SWAT team Commander until he/she determines that the activation is over.
- B. Responsibilities of on-scene patrol supervisor-prior to a SWAT ranking officer arriving on-scene, the patrol supervisor will:
1. Establish inner and outer perimeters
 2. Establish a command post
 3. Arrange for an ambulance(s) to be on scene
 4. Coordinate a staging area for arriving personnel, medical assistance, media, etc.
 5. Develop appropriate intelligence
 6. Begin evacuation (if necessary)
- C. When a SWAT ranking officer arrives on scene, the patrol supervisor will:
1. Brief the SWAT coordinator/supervisor of the situation outlining known factors.
 2. Control of the inner perimeter will be released to the SWAT commander/supervisor who will be responsible for containment and apprehension of the suspect(s). Outer perimeter will remain the responsibility of the patrol supervisor until otherwise relieved.

V. ACTIVATION

- A. The following personnel have the authority to activate the SWAT for any critical incident:
1. Sheriff
 2. SWAT team commander in consultation with the Sheriff
- B. The SWAT team will be notified through the SWAT commander by the field services shift supervisor of any incident or preplanned event that scores a level 3 “high risk” on the threat matrix form VCSO203 for possible activation of the SWAT Team.
- C. Pre-planned event- (i.e. warrant service)
1. The person requesting SWAT support will complete a written pre-printed “threat matrix,” which will be stored with the case file. The purpose of the threat matrix is to make an initial determination, using pre-established risk factors, as to whether tactical support is appropriate.
 3. The SWAT commander (or designee) will be notified first.
 4. He/she will determine if any how many members of the team need to be called in.
- D. Mission planning

1. The SWAT Team will utilize a written planning process for all operations that are proactive or anticipatory in nature, such as warrant service.
2. The written process will include a format that will document how the operation is to be:
 - a. Conducted
 - b. Commanded
 - c. Controlled
 - d. Communication
 - e. Support required

E. Media relations

1. Critical incidents by their nature attract greater than usual media attention. Whenever the SWAT is activated, the Sheriff will designate a PIO for the incident.
2. He/she shall be accessible to the media in an area designated by the incident commander.

F. Post-incident

1. Upon completion of the tactical aspect of the mission, command and control will revert back to the division that initiated the callout for follow-up investigation.
2. Team commander/team leader will ensure that the scene is properly documented (photographed).
3. Members of SWAT may be reassigned as necessary for post incident tasks.

G. Documentation of activation

1. After the situation is resolved, the SWAT commander/supervisor will forward a written report to the Sheriff.
2. The report will include only those actions taken by the SWAT to include:
 - a. Injuries to any persons
 - b. Use of weapons
 - c. Any property damage
3. The team commander will keep a file of all information obtained and actions taken during the callout. These files will be kept for a period of 3 years or longer if there is pending criminal or civil litigation.

H. After action critique

1. At the completion of all operations and significant training events, the SWAT commander will conduct an after action review.
2. The purpose of this review will be to create a forum for team members to offer information for the improvement of the team.
3. The after action review will be formatted to develop the following information:
 - a. Positive factors
 - b. Areas that need improvement
 - c. Solutions for any areas that need correction

VI. TEAM MEMBER SELECTION PROCESS

- A. The SWAT commander is appointed by the Sheriff.
- B. The team leader is selected from member of the team by the Sheriff based upon recommendations by the SWAT Commander.
- C. The SWAT will select members based on certain criteria. The criteria for application will be based on the following:
 1. Satisfactory job performance in present and previous assignments.
 2. Minimum score of 90% on the NMDPS handgun day qualification and 90% on the NMDPS Rifle qualification.
 3. Experience and training-minimum of 3 years law enforcement experience.
 4. Personnel file review.
 5. Oral interview with the Sheriff and SWAT Commander.
 6. No physical limitations and must pass the approved physical agility test.
 7. Ability to work as a team member.
- B. Once accepted and assigned to the SWAT, all operational team members, regardless of rank or position, must maintain acceptable standards of conduct (both on and off duty).
 1. A team member may voluntary withdraw from the team at any time, for any reason.
 2. A team member may be removed from the team, without cause, when deemed necessary for the good of the team by the Sheriff.

VII. TRAINING

- A. Newly assigned SWAT members will complete at least 40 hours of tactical training.
- B. Existing SWAT members will complete 8 hours of training per month in addition to 40 hours annually. They will maintain a minimum score of 90% on all firearms qualifications.
- C. The SWAT will train on appropriate subjects related to the mission of the SWAT Team.

- D. The training program will also include regular updates on legal issues facing SWAT operations, such as warrant service, deadly force, etc.
- E. All training will be documented and maintained by the team commander in the SWAT training file.
- F. A training calendar will be submitted to the Sheriff at the beginning of each month.

VIII. EQUIPMENT

- A. SWAT team operators will have at a minimum the following safety equipment:
 - 1. Ballistic helmet
 - 2. Safety goggles
 - 3. Tactical vest (level 3 protection) with level 4 chest plate insert
 - 4. Duty belt and tactical holster (nylon)
 - 5. Special weapons as authorized by the SWAT Commander
 - 6. Radio earpiece/microphone
 - 7. Gas mask
- B. SWAT members will utilize appropriate utility type uniforms, in the multicam color/pattern. Uniforms will utilize visible and identifiable placards; patches or lettering that identifies of "SHERIFF" or "DEPUTY SHERIFF". Subdued patches or LE identification are not authorized. The SWAT commander must approve all other items of personal wear or equipment.
- C. SWAT members, to whom any item of equipment is issued, are responsible for the care and maintenance of the equipment. Failure to appropriately care for or maintain the equipment in full mission readiness will be grounds for removal from the team. Any item that in is need of repair/replacement must be reported to a SWAT ranking officer immediately. Team leaders at the start of each monthly training program will inspect equipment. Deficiencies will be brought to the attention of the team commander for appropriate action.
- D. SWAT members will wear their ballistic vest during all SWAT missions. SWAT officers will also wear all and only the equipment issued/approved by the SWAT commander. Failure to carry and or wear the required equipment or carrying and or wearing unauthorized equipment is grounds for removal from the team.
- E. Equipment storage
 - 1. All team equipment i.e. ballistic shields, face shields, etc. will be stored in the SWAT vehicle or in the equipment room (not with an individual unless approved by the SWAT commander or team leader)

2. All issued equipment should be carried with the officer while on duty.

F. Special equipment

1. The missions of the SWAT are often performed in hazardous environments.
2. Recognizing that the safety of innocent citizens, deputies, and suspects is often jeopardized by these hazardous conditions, it shall be the intent of the SWAT to utilize special equipment, in an attempt to reduce the risk of injury or death to all involved.
3. The SWAT commander will insure that only those team members properly trained in the use of the special equipment will utilize the equipment.
 - a. Primary entry weapons: A short-barreled weapon, which enables a team member to acquire rapid target acquisition, enhances high levels of accuracy, and provides maneuverability, reliability, stopping power, and sustained fire capacity.
 - b. High caliber rifles: These weapons allow the team member to place highly accurate rounds where needed to help resolve life-threatening incidents.
 - c. Less lethal weapons or munition: Weapons or ammunition, which propel a round or device that is not normally lethal in nature. Designed to offer an alternative to the use of deadly force when appropriate (see department policy on less lethal weapons).
 - d. Noise/flash diversionary devices: Designed to save lives and reduce the potential for shooting situations by providing for a diversion for the entry of SWAT personnel into a hazardous area. Utilizes a bright flash of light followed immediately by a loud noise.
 1. Diversionary devices will not be utilized when small children are involved.
 2. Diversionary devices can cause fires and property damage. Care will be used when utilizing these devices to minimize these risks.
 - e. Breaching tools and ammunition: Items such as rams, pry bars, special frangible shotgun rounds, etc., which are designed to force entry into barricaded or secured areas.
4. When there is a need for hostage negotiation the department utilizes the crisis team from Central New Mexico Correctional Facility. The department can also use negotiators from the New Mexico State Police Tactical Team when joint operations are conducted.
5. The SWAT team utilizes a 40mm special purpose launcher.

- a. This system will only be deployed by selected SWAT team operators who have qualified with the delivery system. This system will be deployed with a lethal cover officer.
- b. The 40mm can be used to deploy less lethal munitions or chemical munitions.
- c. The 40mm is to only be deployed when authorized by the SWAT commander.

IX. VEHICLES

All SWAT Vehicles will be inspected monthly for operational readiness. An SWAT member will be assigned to each vehicle on a monthly basis by the team leader. That team member upon discovering a vehicle in need of repair and or routine maintenance will complete the work order and submit it to the department fleet supervisor for repair. He/she will follow up to ensure the work is completed that the vehicle is ready for use. He/she will notify the team leader immediately upon a vehicle being out for maintenance and when the work is completed.